

Sermon- Seeking His Glory

Scripture: John 17:1-5

Sunday August 23, 2020

Last Sunday Samuel preached from the book of Lamentations where he talked about being real with God in the midst of our suffering. Because being honest with God helps us be honest with ourselves. Being real puts us in a position to see the salvation that God has prepared for us no matter what our situation.

This Sunday we are going to return to the Gospel of John and pick up where we left off. We will get into the 17th chapter of John which encapsulates Jesus' high priestly prayer. This prayer has distinct sections and we will deal with each section separately. Today we will deal with the opening 5 verses of this prayer, Jesus' petition for glorification.

The opening of this prayer reminds you of another prayer of Jesus, the famous Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer as you know opens with the famous line, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name". Another way of saying, *may your name be glorified*. I bring that up because it does seem that the first concern that Jesus expresses when He prays to his heavenly Father is that **His father is glorified**.

But in our prayer, he says, "Father, glorify me so that I can glorify you". These words may seem strange to our ears because we live in such a self-promoting culture. So it is possible that many might hear these words today and think that Jesus is asking to be glorified for some selfish motive. So let me deconstruct the background we come from so that we can hear more clearly what Jesus is saying.

You see when God created the world he created many kinds of angels. And the highest kind of angel he created was a cherubim. And among cherubim too there was one who was the most beautiful, intelligent and powerful of all. He was called the guardian cherubim. The one who walked on fiery stones in the very presence of God. He was also

called the “morning star”. Initially he was blameless in this actions. But here is the thing. The irony is that the creature God had endowed with the most gifts was the creature to become prideful and unsatisfied with his position in life. So this character said, and I quote from Is 14:13-14 e

“**I will** ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God;

I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.” - [Isaiah 14:13-14](#) NIV

This creature is saying, I will make myself like the Creator. This is self-exaltation to the extreme. Now not only did this creature think these proud thoughts but he also used his God given abilities to convince a third of the angels to worship him rather than the creator God. At this point, for the first time in the history of the universe, there is confusion about what or who deserves honor and glory in the universe. When Satan is convincing the angels, the **truth** gets muddled and what is **good and bad** gets muddled even in the realm of the heavens. At this point God throws satan and his followers out of heaven and sends them to the earth. That means all that confusion about what is good, and true and glorious and honorable becomes muddled here on earth.

What is the result of all this muddling? The result is that here on earth people don't automatically sense what is good and true and honorable. People are able to utter the most foolish and obvious of lies and many people actually believe it. Did you know that the Flat Earth Society page on Facebook has 213,000 followers. And this in the year 2020! With social media it is really easy to spread any information and Satan has ensured that false information will have a receptive ear. This muddles situation also means that people are making themselves their own highest authority. Individuals are

tempted to make themselves the judge of what is right and wrong. People in many cultures today do what seems good in their own eyes without referencing a higher authority and people everywhere are always tempted to live to please themselves. People are even tempted to play God in small and sometimes large ways. As a result of all this playing god, when you look around what do you see? You see created things being glorified, you see individuals being glorified and you see lies, violence and carnality being glorified.

And what happens when all these senseless and worthless things are glorified? Just like the light pollution on earth dims the light of the stars so that in big cities you can see very few stars at night, so also all the senseless celebrity and shallowness glorification dims the light of the glory of God himself here on earth. This is the landscape of fallen glory that we inhabit today. In this landscape deceived human beings are being drawn to the wrong kind of glory constantly. It is like living in a world where people are unable to perceive sunlight but will be drawn like a moth to a light bulb. People today cannot appreciate true glory because they have eyes only for the poor imitations of the real thing.

But in all this, was God going to sit by while the fog of confusion enveloped and stole all His image bearers from his hands? No not really! God had a secret plan. A plan kept hidden through the ages. A plan that was hinted at through his prophets but came to fruition through His son Jesus Christ. A plan that was going to be put into action at just the right time. And that is where we find Jesus in his prayer in John 17. Because in this prayer we find the curtain of the Holy of Holies opened and God revealing an intimate conversation that is happening right inside the Godhead. And what God is revealing is this. That the time has come for something extraordinary to take place. The time has come for Jesus to glorify God. But the way He was going to do it was designed to be completely invisible to the enemy. He asked God to glorify himself so that he could

glorify His Father. But what is not mentioned in these verses is the “how”. But the “how” is implied by the position of this prayer, just before Jesus puts his life in the hands of the Romans. So the “how” was that Jesus was going to be glorified by what he was willing to do, which was to fully empty out His glory on the cross. This is how Col 2:6-8 puts it,

Jesus Christ, Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Jesus Christ was sent on earth to completely empty out the glory he had. But here is the incredible part of God’s plan. When Jesus Christ emptied his glory on the cross, he was able to place himself under every human being no matter how messed up and miserable. A person fallen in the muck face down is not able to see you if you are hovering over them right? They will only be able to see someone who is at their level. That is what Jesus manages to do on the cross. When he was lifted on the cross, he managed to come underneath the most lowly and wretched of all human beings. And when he had done that his heavenly father raised him from the dead and like the sea that was held back by a strong wind for a few minutes and then comes rushing back when the wind dies down, so also Jesus Christ had all his heavenly glory rush back to envelop him once more upon his return to the right hand of His heavenly Father.

So do you know what that enabled Jesus Christ to do? It enabled Jesus Christ to lift all the people whom he had placed his hands underneath to be lifted with him into heaven right into the presence of God the Father. Think of Jesus' work on the cross as the spiritual fork lift. Lifting from underneath is the gentlest way of lifting something, isn't it? Like if you want to lift a butterfly without injuring it. You can grab its wings and pick it up but in the process you are going to damage its wings. Trust me, I know because I have tried. Lifting from below is the gentlest and most careful way of picking up a fallen object. And that is what Jesus does on the cross. He went to the lowest spot a human being could go spiritually and emotionally, so that he could lift them up in the most gentle way to the highest place they were created to be. IN John 12:32 Jesus says, "***And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself***"

Let's jump to verse 4 and 5 because these verses wrap up the theme of glory that we are working on today. We will work with verses 2 and 3 which talk about eternal life next week. But in 4 and 5 Jesus wraps up this first part of his prayer by saying, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do". So once the work of glorifying the father on earth is done, Jesus can at that point return to heaven with all his original glory restored and with all the people lifted up with him who he planned to take with him.

But the question is, how did all this that Jesus accomplished bring glory to the Father? I wanted to draw your attention to verse 4 which said, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do". Well, if you look at the work all the people who are not under the Lordship of Jesus Christ on earth do, they are all things that knowingly or unknowingly further the agenda of the enemy. So sometimes they will do terrible things. And people will look at the terrible things and say, "look there cannot be a God if such terrible things happen". Or in some cases people will do great and wonderful things like giving millions of dollars to help people in some way. And then

people will look upon those good deeds and say, see, people are all basically good if they are given the right environment. So the problem is not human nature. Well, if there is no problem with human nature, we won't have a sin problem and there is no need of a savior. So do you see how in the world when people act on their own, whether they do good deeds or bad deeds, their actions only cause more muddling and confusion. And with that muddling and confusion, God's glory on earth is further diminished. So when Jesus Christ finished His work on earth, because He was doing what God the Father had sent him to do, it was like turning on a special light. And in that special light of Jesus, what is truly good and bad is made visible with great clarity for the first time since the fall. And because of that clarity with which God's plan and love for his people is made visible on the cross, God's glory was made visible on earth like it never was since the time of creation.

So what does understanding this part of the conversation within the Godhead mean for us. Three takeaways.

One, our first task will always be to bring glory to our heavenly Father. There are a million kinds of ministry out there and every Christ follower even when you are teaching kids or writing software or repairing roads, your first task is to bring glory to our heavenly Father. And we do that by being aware of the mess and confusion and lies that Satan has spread in that part of the world where you are and working to undo that and enable God to be blessed there. You don't have to do something big. But whatever you do, do it as someone sent from God into that space for the purpose of making God visible once more. So for example when you are in an environment that is hostile for believers, be loving like Christ would be. When confusion is sown about a topic, present clarity. When violence is used be prepared to demonstrate the power of caring for the well being of the other, in other words, be prepared to demonstrate the power of

Christ's love. Whatever you do, remember that the end goal of your life is to bring glory to God.

Secondly, our task from God is to reach the lost. And to do that, think about how you can get under those who are broken. What do I mean by that? I mean being able to see the worth and value of a person no matter how messed up. Why should we do this? Because that is the way God sees them. If we can whisper worth and value into the ears of a broken person, that means we have somehow managed to position ourselves not above them but underneath them. And when you are there, with your hands under them, you are now in a position to lift them to God.

Thirdly, know this. Being on mission for God is hard, exhausting work with a lot of spiritual blowback, mental flexibility, quick reflexes and being willing to put everything you have on the line for the task in front of you. But know this. Whatever you give to God, you will get back 10 fold? How do I say that? That is what you see in the life of Jesus Christ. In return for all the glory that Christ drained from His being, it was all poured back into his life and more at his return to heaven. Matt 19:29 says this, 9
And everyone who has
left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for the sake of My name will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. Why is this? Because remember when you are working for God, He is never going to be in a position of being indebted to you his creation. So that is why we can approach the tasks that he has given us without hesitation and without worrying about what you will loose because if God has sent you on a mission, it is impossible to lose in the final analysis.

So remember, our first task is always to glorify God. Secondly, glorifying God will involve dealing with lost and broken people. And when you deal with lost and broken people make sure you position yourself below them and no where else. And finally, don't worry

about what the mission costs you because when you bring glory to God, He will give you way more than you deserve for it.